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ABSTRACT

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Teachers (*Melamdim*) and Educators (*Mehankhim*)—Who Are We? Implications for Professionalizing Orthodox Jewish Education

by Jeffrey Saks

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Melamdim and *mehankhim* – who are we?

Implications for professionalizing Orthodox Jewish education

Jeffrey Saks

This article puts forth an argument for new lines of inquiry and deliberation in the process of professionalizing Orthodox Jewish education. Using 'professionalization' to describe a process that emanates from *within* the profession and its practitioners, and not issues (such as salary, benefits, status, etc.) which are largely controlled by those working *outside* of the profession, the author argues for the development of a Jewish theory of education as a hallmark of enriching our communal endeavor – enabling us to fulfill the decree of 'walking in His ways' as we educate the Jewish people.

'And Torat Hessed (Torah of kindness) upon her tongue' (Prov. 31:26) – Is there a Torah which is not a Torat Hessed? Some say: Torah for teaching is the Torah of kindness. (Sukkah 49b)

As is well known, the Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, often referred to himself as a mere *melamed* – a simple teacher. However, the Rav would continue, this is a most honorable title, as the Almighty Himself too is merely a simple teacher, for we refer to him each morning in *birkhat ha-Torah* as the *melamed Torah le-amo Yisrael*.[1] In teaching Torah we are not only fulfilling that *mitzvah*, but the commandment of *imatatio Dei* as well.

Similarly, Nehama Leibowitz left instruction that her gravestone be marked only with the word: *Morah* – Teacher. Surely there is something paradoxical in the preeminent rabbinic sage, the rabbi *par excellence*, and the preeminent teacher of *Tanakh* – or, if you will, the rabbi's rabbi and the teacher's teacher – choosing to refer to themselves as *merely* simple *melamdim*. Certainly both of these figures were aware, albeit in a deeply humble way, of their deep impact on generations of students and thereby on the Jewish community at large.

We have then something truly ironic about our profession: the degree to which it is viewed in the *simplest* fashion is the degree to which it becomes most sublime. We imagine God Himself (as it were) sitting, *lehrnen* Humash and Rashi with the smallest schoolboy (as the Rav himself would do in the hallways of his Maimonides School). One might falsely deduce that the professionalization of Jewish education – that is, an ongoing effort to upgrade and sophisticate, to introduce *hiddush*, with the set of values and complexities that necessarily accompany such a process – somehow diminishes the very holiness of what we do. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Educating the Jewish people is a holy task, and the complexities of doing it correctly in the contemporary world demand that those entrusted with the task develop the sophistication to succeed, and to lead this enterprise to new levels of

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improvement, development, and accomplishment.

This paper argues that the degree to which we begin to look upon ourselves as educators (*mehankhim*) and not merely teachers (*melamdim*, *morim*), will not only mark a level of reflection on and analysis of the practice of our craft. It will also signal our endeavor as being vision-driven (among other things), and will in a very real way contribute to the enrichment of our communal endeavor – enabling us to fulfill the divine decree of 'walking in His ways' as we educate our students. In order to undertake this paradigm shift, this *heshbon ha-nefesh*, we must determine what the characteristics of a profession are in general, and for Jewish education specifically.[2] Only then will we be able to consider how Jewish education ranks as a profession (according to these criteria), by way of determining areas for improvement.

It is important to note from the outset that – for the purposes of this essay – I use the category of 'professionalization' to describe a process that emanates from *within* the profession (that is, an articulation of goals rooted in theoretical conceptions of general education and Torah education, which are then applied to enriching our practice), and not issues (such as salary, benefits, status, etc.) which are largely controlled by those working *outside* of the profession.[3] By focusing on 'internal' professionalization, I do not mean that this is something which educators can or should do alone, in isolation from those who sit 'outside' the profession. On the contrary, the process can be activated *only* by combining all of the players – teachers and administrators and lay leadership, formal and informal educators, academics and elementary school personnel, students of *yeshivot* and of universities – to develop a general Jewish theory of education.[4] However, on the topic of the 'external' indicators of the profession, the remark of Dan Lortie, the sociologist of education, rings true for us as well:

the process can be activated only by combining all of the players to develop a general Jewish theory of education

> [T]eaching, from its inception in America, has occupied a special but shadowed social standing. The services performed by teachers have usually been seen as above the run of everyday work, and the occupation has had the aura of a special mission honored by society. But social ambiguity has stalked those who undertook the mission, for the *real* regard shown those who taught has never matched the *professed* regard. Teaching is a status accorded high respectability of a particular kind; but those occupying it do not receive the level or types of deference reserved for those working in the learned professions, occupying high government office, or demonstrating success in business.[5]

These are indeed important additional components in the future professionalization of Jewish education (and general education!), but lay outside of the scope of the thesis presented here – which argues that first and foremost Jewish educators must forge a professional self-identity *for themselves*, primarily through the development of Jewish theories of education.

Among the *internal* 'commonplaces' of professionalization where we score the highest mark is the area of teaching as life in the service of others and of the community as a whole. This is an area which is particularly rich in traditional sources, but those which often serve as 'little more than a medley of edifying ideas, raw material for after-dinner speeches by well-meaning community leaders, consisting of no more than exhortation and perhaps enrichment'.[6]

The late Rabbi Isadore Twersky, formulated this 'calling' and the goals of Jewish education as follows:

> Our goal should be to make it possible for every Jewish person, child or adult, to be exposed to the mystery and romance of Jewish history, to the enthralling insights and special sensitivities of Jewish thought, to the sanctity and symbolism of Jewish existence, and to the power and profundity of Jewish faith… Education, in its broadest sense, will enable young people to confront the secret of Jewish tenacity and existence, the quality of Torah teaching which fascinates and attracts irresistibly. They will then be able, even eager, to find their place in a creative and constructive Jewish community.[7]

In his teachings on Maimonides' view of pedagogy, Rabbi Twersky[8] also pointed to Rambam's formulation in *The Guide of the Perplexed* (I, 15):

> 'And, behold, the Lord stood erect upon it' [referring to the ladder in Jacob's vision, see: Gen. 28:13], that is, was

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> stably and constantly upon it – I mean upon the ladder, one end of which is in heaven, while the other end is upon the earth. Everyone who ascends does so climbing up this ladder, so that he necessarily apprehends Him who is upon it, as he is stably and permanently at the top of the ladder. It is clear that what I say here of Him conforms to the parable propounded. For the angels of God [seen by Jacob going up and down the ladder] are the prophets with reference to whom it is clearly said: 'and He sent an angel' [Num. 20:16] … How well put is the phrase 'ascending and descending' [Gen. 28:12], in which ascent comes before descent. For after the ascent and the attaining of certain rungs of the ladder that may be known comes the descent with whatever decree the prophet has been informed of – with a view to governing and teaching the people of the earth.[9]

Rabbi Twersky read this passage as a clear moral calling to educators (here titled prophets – educators *par excellence*[10]), whose ascent to heaven and knowledge of God is attained only in tandem with the mandate to 'descend' to the people, and serve as agents of the knowledge of God, as well as vessels for *ahavat Hashem* (love of God), as Rabbi Twersky went on to point to the Midrash (*Sifrei*, Deut. 32), that '"To love the Lord thy God" [Deut. 6:5, is fulfilled through] bringing others to the love of Him, as did Abraham…'[11]

We have here an abundantly clear call to service which expresses itself as a moral duty of the highest order. However, this can only be the *beginning* of professionalism, and not the ultimate objective. It is a *sine qua non*, but not an end in itself, in pursuit of an increasingly sophisticated education and a genuine Jewish theory of education.

Toward a Jewish theory of education

Let us understand that teaching (*l'lamed*) represents the techniques and methods that are employed in the process we call educating (*l'hanekh*), but is not itself the ultimate fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of education. Without overextending the metaphor, we can relate this to the Brisker conception of the dichotomous nature of *ma'aseh* and *kiyyum*, in which certain *mitzvot* are broken down into component parts. For example, in Rabbi Soloveitchik's treatment of *teshuva*, the act of repentance is accomplished through the recitation of confession, while the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* is wholly internal, comprising resolve for the future and refinement of the repentant's personality.[12]

We can here refer to R. Kalonimus Kalman Shapira's classic work on Jewish education, *Hovat HaTalmidim*.[13] In the introduction (addressed to '*melamdim ve-avot ha-banim*', teachers and fathers), R. Shapira wrote:

> Our goal here is not to teach the craft of pedagogy – how to utilize the student's mind in various ways, how to broaden his understanding and knowledge of the meaning of the Torah. For what we are seeking now is not the student's intellect alone: we are interested in the *whole student*. We wish to connect the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* of Jewish children to the God of Israel, so that they will emerge as Jews who revere the word of the Lord and direct all their desires toward Him.

That is, the thrust of *Hovat HaTalmidim* is not pedagogical (i.e. the art and skills of *teaching*) per se, but *educational*. The educational program that he advocates holds as its central goal the educating of the *whole* student – not merely in knowledge growth, but in spiritual development, until he becomes 'connected to the God of Israel' and assiduously 'reveres His word'.

The ability to be a more effective educator is strengthened by developing a certain professional self-awareness in which teacher, student (both the individual student and the class as a whole) and subject matter are brought into a level of accord as alluded to in the *Hovat HaTalmidim*. That is, to educate the 'whole' student requires an awareness, on the part of the educator, of the 'whole' which is within one's pedagogy, and within oneself. This is neither a small nor simple task, but is mandatory if the educator will serve as the 'connector' between the student, subject matter, and, ultimately, God Himself.

teaching represents the techniques and methods that are employed in the process we call educating, but is not itself the ultimate fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of education

Let us take another example of a guiding Jewish theory of education from the writing of Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein:

> The encounter with God as commander lies at the heart of Jewish existence; to the extent that it is realized

> through Talmud Torah, the legal corpus, as developed in the Oral tradition, is a prime vehicle for this encounter… The process [of Talmud Torah]…is no less important than its resolution; and even if one has retained nothing, the experience itself – live contact with the epiphanous divine will manifest through Torah, and encounter with the divine Presence, which hovers over its students – is immeasurably important. Talmud Torah is not just informative or illuminating; it is ennobling and purgative. [14]

Rabbi Lichtenstein makes a serious curricular point, which (if utilized) can help answer a serious problem in our current educational practice. Many of our students (and, I dare say, their parents) are at best curious, and at worst deeply troubled by the question of why we dedicate the overwhelming bulk of our time to the study of *Torah she-ba'al Peh* (primarily, Talmud), when, it seems to them, so few students obtain an independent mastery of the material and this allocation of time leaves many other important subjects relegated to secondary status or curricular oblivion.

our 'method of educating' must strive towards being all encompassing – cradle to grave education

Rabbi Lichtenstein presents us with a clear guiding theory for our practice: *Torah she-ba'al Peh* reigns supreme because it is, in its ideal state, best able to create the 'encounter' between the student and 'God as commander'. In the words of the *Hovat HaTalmidim*, the student becomes 'connected to the God of Israel… revering the word of the Lord'. The question then properly is not why we teach so much Talmud, but why aren't we being more successful in using it as a tool to forge that encounter? Why aren't we focusing more resources on determining *how* to forge the encounter in the first place (especially insofar as generating the encounter is more pedagogically complex in the modern world). Rabbi Lichtenstein continues:

> To an outsider, much of traditional Talmud Torah no doubt borders on the absurd. From a purely rational or pragmatic perspective, the prospect of a group of laymen studying the minutiae of complex and often 'irrelevant' *halakhot* may indeed be bizarre. In light of Jewish commitment and experience, however, it is thoroughly intelligible.[15]

Why do so many of our students consider themselves 'outsiders'? What can be done to get them to view themselves in the 'light of Jewish commitment and experience'? Intuitively and from my own experiences I am convinced that Rabbi Lichtenstein is correct in this theory, but how do we properly implement it *pedagogically*? How do we create a 'theory-*driven* practice' to bridge those two worlds (theory and practice) that so often stand against each other or (worse) with their backs turned toward each other?

By 'theory driven practice', I mean the act of 'translating' (what others might call 'applying') from theoretical guiding principles to the act of teaching in a way which a theory of 'Jewish commitment and experience' as a whole is translated into a systematic method of educating. Of course, our 'method of educating' must strive towards being all encompassing – schools and synagogues, informal and adult education, etc., including (but not limited to) the content and configurations of these educational settings – in a word: cradle to grave education.[16]

Of course, as noted above, this can only properly be done *after* the development of an educational philosophy deeply grounded in a well-articulated, explicit theory of education.[17] Through a level of self-reflection, the impact of expertise, and critical examination, educators and communities can develop this level of edifying self-awareness that enables the development and implementation of theories of practice.

However, to develop this sense of professional self-awareness is no simple thing. To a certain degree it requires a 'stepping outside' of oneself, one's setting, and (at times) even one's community, in order to evaluate the practice *qua* profession. This is an important point. A certain level of inertia (engendered by our high ideals) prevents us from this 'stepping out' – or better yet, *hit'alut*, stepping *above* ourselves – which allows us to be self-critical, and (just as important) to be open to critique from others. 'Stepping above' is actually the most appropriate figure of speech for what we are describing, as the word 'theory' itself comes from the Greek *theorein* – which means beholding, or speculating from above.[18]

Furthermore, this 'distancing' from practice allows us to draw from a body of theory, which defines the very profession, and enables us to

reactivate the deeper guiding principles in an ongoing way. However, as alluded to above, there is a fear that the very act of perspective taking diminishes the sanctity of educating, because the 'stepping outside' is misunderstood to be a stepping *away* from Jewish tradition and culture.

On the contrary! Traditional sources must serve as the basis for our theory of education and vision for each educator and the community they will lead. Professionalization requires that we develop the strategies necessary to actualize and implement this theory and vision. Jewish tradition serves as a crucial resource in molding a young educator's understanding of his or her profession. Unfortunately, these sources often merely serve as slogans, and have often not been fully processed to offer the guiding theory into *hinukh*.[19]

Among other things, successful education is the expression of a healthy community, here defined as one which has a sense of common values, ideas about the world, certain shared assumptions, and (perhaps most importantly) a clearly articulated vision of what an educated student (=initiate into the community) ought 'look' like. It is only a sign of self-confidence for a community to look from within, and draw upon its own sources (in a sophisticated and fully 'processed' way) to shape this vision.

Too often we confuse the *kiyyum ha-mitzvah* of teaching and learning Torah – which, from a purely normative standpoint, is the same for the *am ha'aretz* sitting reciting *Tehillim* and the *talmid hakham* who 'builds worlds' through his innovative interpretations of talmudic texts[20] – with the deep reflection on developing goals and methods that are specific to each educational setting. Ironically, the fact that we are so committed – ethically, morally, spiritually – to what we are doing, opens a loophole which occasionally allows us to escape responsibility for the level of critical inquiry necessary to perfect our craft, and thereby enhance and beautify the *mitzvah*. Simply put, we are often put off from critically examining ourselves because the '*mitzvah* meter' in heaven is running no matter what we learn, so why tinker? A similar form of 'loophole' is our commitment to life-long learning, which (when reduced merely to a slogan) serves as an excuse *not* to learn – 'If learning Gemara is something you're supposed to do for your whole life, then can you not do it *after* graduating from an Ivy League college?' – I seem to recall someone asking me upon my decision to study in Israel and at Yeshiva University after high school.

The element of 'beautifying inquiry' – *hiddur mitzvah* – that I am here arguing for is represented by a level of critical self-examination (both individually and communally) that enables us to explicate and clarify the theories of education that can and should be informing our practice. Our tradition calls for the enrichment of practice through examination of theory and a deliberative process.

Let us momentarily expand upon this halakhic metaphor of *hiddur mitzvah*. We know that there is an obligation to beautify the *mitzvot*,[21] even up to a one-third increase in cost beyond what would otherwise minimally fulfill the halakhic requirement.[22] In almost every case, this obligation, while a mandatory ideal, does not *ex post facto* invalidate the performance of the *mitzvah* if omitted. Perhaps the most notable exception, in which a lack of *hiddur* does invalidate the *mitzvah*, is in the writing of a Torah scroll. The example from the Talmud [TB Gittin 20a] is the case of a scribe who, while writing God's name in the Torah momentarily thinks of something else, thus invalidating the Torah for lack of the specific requirement of *kavannah* – special intent – upon writing God's holy name.

The Talmud speculates that the scribe might rewrite over the *kavannah*-void four letters, this time with the mandatory intent – but rejects this possibility, for the Name (although now *kavannah*-empowered) would be blemished with splotches (i.e. lacking *hiddur*) due to the second coat of ink. In this case, a lack of *hiddur mitzvah* invalidates the scroll even *ex post facto*.[23] If this is true for God's name in a Torah scroll, homiletically we may extend it to Jewish education as a whole, for what is *hinukh* if not the dispersion of God's name to the Jewish people and the world?[24] Imagine, if you can, a world in which we would add one-third in the name of *hiddur mitzvah* to the resources (not merely financial, but of energy, emotion, commitment, passion, intellect, talent, etc.) currently dedicated to Jewish education! Efforts (such as those described here) toward the professionalization of

successful education is the expression of a healthy community

hinukh are mandated – perhaps even biblically – in the name of *hiddur mitzvat hinukh*.

What should an educator be?

We must ask ourselves: What are the conceptions of what an educator is (or ought to be)? What is an educated student? Indeed, what are the very goals of our communal educational enterprise as derived from our own resources and traditions? Further we must ask, what are the given meta-theories of Jewish education or Jewish educational practice? Only after deliberating upon these questions should we introduce outside systems or conceptions as a way of evaluating our own internal rigor, thoroughness, etc.

Much attention has recently been placed on the role of the mimetic in contemporary Jewish life.[25] Ironically, it is quite possible that Jewish educating is so intrinsic to our lives (both personally and communally), and something that we do so naturally, as part of our mimetic tradition ('this is the way we do it because this is the way we've always done it'; or 'this is what we learn, because this is what we've always learned'), that it becomes arduous to critically examine. That this is historically not true does not seem to bother the mimetic consciousness, which is, ironically, somewhat ahistorical – we imagine all of the preceding generations learning what and how we do. We live off the spiritual capital of the past,[26] which renders critical self-scrutiny (either individually or communally) a difficult yet necessary task, primarily due to this emotional involvement.

Only in this way can we create a genuine *Jewish* theory of education, and not merely a theory of Jewish education

After developing a conception of Jewish theories of education, the fields of general education and educational meta-theory (including, *inter alia*, the fields of sociology, psychology, philosophy) can then also (perhaps must) be examined, and not feared or negated, as a source of crucial insight for professionalization. However, when we do turn to 'outside' sources it must be in a disciplined way, not as a form of cheap imitation or to provide more of the 'slogans' mentioned above.

Only in this way can we create a genuine *Jewish* theory of education, and not merely a theory of Jewish education.

Profession as community of learners

Another necessary element toward the professionalization of Jewish education, along the model presented above, is the creation of a professional community which, most would agree, does not exist in a meaningful enough way at present.

The nature of teaching is such that teachers – from the very beginning of their careers – spend most of their time in isolation from their colleagues – that is, behind classroom doors. Classroom teachers make hundreds of decisions every day, and do so in isolation from peers or supervisors. Often, young educators resist seeking out advice, fearing to admit their shortcomings. In the best of our educational settings, mentoring and supervision are rare, and when it does exist experienced colleagues can at best only be present for a small fraction of beginner's classroom activities.[27]

As Lortie has written:

> Teaching is not like other crafts and professions, whose members talk in a language specific to them and their work... Without such a framework, the neophyte is less able to order the flux and color of daily events and can miss crucial transactions which might otherwise be encoded in the categories of a developed discourse. Each teacher must laboriously construct ways of perceiving and interpreting what is significant.[28]

Naturally, this *de facto* nature of teaching limits opportunities for collaboration, cross-fertilization of ideas, and mentorships.

The hallmark of our conception for intellectual growth is the Talmudic dictum [TB Ta'anit 23a]: *give me 'intellectual collaboration' or give me death!* Anyone who has spent any time inside a Bet Midrash knows the benefits of the dichotomous partnership/oppositional relationship of *hevruta*.[29] Just as it is imperative that *mehankhim* continue their own learning once in the field, it is crucial that they be encouraged and given the opportunity to participate in discourse with colleagues, and (especially) that young educators be given the opportunity to develop meaningful professional relationships with senior staff. Further, I would argue, it is not enough that such a culture should

Through the process and components of professionalization, we *can* become *mehankhim*-educators, and only then do we approach the true *melamed*

be created within an individual school, but we must seek out ways of fostering this dialogue throughout our community, both in the Diaspora and Israel.[30] For our profession to flourish, each young *mehanekh* must become part of a community of *mehankhim* who are simultaneously a community of learners.

Conclusion

And so we come full-circle. Through the process and components of professionalization, we *can* become *mehankhim*-educators, and only then do we approach the true *Melamed* – as did Rabbi Soloveitchik, Nehama Leibowitz, and all great Torah teachers throughout the ages. It is difficult to approach the sublime, but it is worthwhile – indeed, obligatory. We have been given a great gift, *Torat Hashem Temimah*, along with a great challenge: Will we turn it into *Torat hesed* of the highest order? *Torat hesed* only exists if it is part of the ongoing transmission of education – but it must be done well. Educators must develop for themselves, and for their communities, Jewish theories of education which can drive their practice. We must work amongst communities of teacher-learners, committed to professional and personal growth, and together implement a level of *hiddur mitzvah* as we educate the Jewish people.

Notes

This essay was part of a larger project undertaken under the auspices of the Jerusalem Fellows program, and has benefited from the insights of: Susan Handelman, Joel B. Wolowelsky, and especially Daniel Marom.

1 See, e.g.: R. Hershel Schachter, *Nefesh ha-Rav* (Jerusalem 1994) p.70. It is significant to note the version of the blessing according to the Siddur of R. Amram Gaon is '*ha-melamed Torah le-amo yisrael* ***berahamim*** – teaches Torah to His people Israel *in mercy*'. The talmudic source of the blessing is TB Berakhot 11b.

2 Among the research in general education which has helped inform my thinking on this, see esp.: Lee S. Shulman, 'Theory, Practice, and the Education of Professionals', *The Elementary School Journal* 98:5 (1998) pp.511–26. Additionally, see John Dewey, 'The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education', in Jo Ann Boydston, ed., *John Dewey – The Middle Works*, 1899–1924, vol. 3: 1903–1906 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press 1977) pp.249–72.

3 For useful treatments of these 'external' professionalizing factors in Jewish education (although not specifically for Orthodoxy, per se), see Joseph Reimer, ed., *To Build a Profession: Careers in Jewish Education* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University 1987); Isa Aron, *Toward the Professionalization of Jewish Teaching* (Commission on Jewish Education in North America 1990); and Adam Gamoran *et al.*, *The Teachers Report: A Portrait of Teachers in Jewish Schools* (Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education 1998).

4 In this the ideals of education *qua* profession seem to me to be unique. Are there any other professions which 'combine all the players' to define the indicators of professionalism? In medicine the patient is certainly not a player in establishing the parameters for the community of professionals – despite the fact that the practice of medicine clearly effects them in the most direct way!

5 Dan C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1975) p.10. For an update on Lortie's groundbreaking research, see Eugene Provenzo, Jr., and Gary N. McCloskey, *Schoolteachers and Schooling: Ethoses in Conflict* (Washington: National Academy Press 1996). For our own professed regard for teaching, see, *inter alia*, Maimonides, MT Talmud Torah, ch. 5–6.

6 Michael Rosenak, *Roads to the Palace: Jewish Texts and Teaching* (Oxford: Berghahn Books 1995) p.xi.

7 R. Isadore Twersky, *A Time to Act: The Report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America* (University Press of America 1990) p.19.

8 Rabbi Twersky presented this in the context of the deliberations of the 'Educated Jew' project at the Mandel Institute of Jerusalem, where his task was to articulate the Maimonidean theories of education. His essay will be included in the forthcoming *Visions of Learning: Variant Conceptions of Jewish Education* (ed. S. Fox, I. Scheffler, and D. Marom).

9 In general, compare the Maimonidean parable of ascending the ladder in order to descend with God's teaching, with Plato's cave in his *Republic*, book VII: 518–19, in which the prisoners must return to the cave after having been freed and seen the light of the sun, as Socrates there states:

> They [the best minds] must continue to ascend until

> they arrive at the good; but when they have ascended and seen enough we must not allow them to do as they do now … – that they remain in the upper world: but this must not be allowed; they must be made to descend again among the prisoners in the cave…

To be sure, for Plato the obligation to return to the cave is morally and even epistemologically different than Maimonides' conception – which surely views knowledge as impacting on the entire world of being and knowledge being implicitly relational, whereas Plato is describing the politically driven necessities of having philosophers at the head of the State.

10 Cf. Maimonides' formulation in MT Talmud Torah 4:1, based on Malakhi 2:7, that a teacher ought be a 'messenger (=*malakh*/angel) of the Lord of hosts'.

11 Let us remember that *ahavat Hashem* is no small thing, see: MT Yesodei HaTorah 2:2, 4:12, e.g. And what is Jewish education's ultimate goal if not *ahavat Hashem ve-yirato*? We are well adjured to recall the remark of Nehama Leibowitz, who not only wrote, but exemplified in her own teaching the idea that '[a] teacher must always remember that our primary goal is not to increase knowledge … rather, to increase *ahavat HaTorah* – that the words of Torah should be beloved and dear to the student'. See her *Limud Parshanei HaTorah ve-Derakhim le-Horatam* (Jerusalem 1978) introduction.

12 Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *On Repentance*, chap. 1.

13 R. Kalonimus Kalman Shapira (1889–1943) of Piaseczno, also known as the rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto, wrote his *Hovat HaTalmidim* as a statement of the basic principles of his transformative educational method. Surprisingly, no one has yet written a comprehensive analysis of this method, or attempted to apply it to a contemporary setting. See, however, the forward by Aharon Sorasky in *A Student's Obligation: Advice from the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto*, trans. Micha Odenheimer (Northvale, NJ: Aronson 1991). This passage appears on p.6.

14 Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, 'Study', in Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr, eds, *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought* (New York: Scribner 1987) p.933. Compare Rabbi Lichtenstein's remark with that of the *Nefesh HaHayyim* I, 21:

> This is the Law of Man: When one busies himself with Torah study *lishmah*, in order to observe and fulfill all that is written therein, he cleanses his body from head to toe… Just as in immersion [in a *mikveh*] the Sages have declared that the entire body must be immersed in the water [cf. TB Eruvin 4b], so too must one be totally immersed in the words of Torah… [And] just as the whole body becomes elevated and purified through Torah study and *mitzvot*, *so too all worlds* of which man is a prototype [cf. *Nefesh HaHayyim* I, 6] likewise become purified, refined, and elevated.

15 Rabbi Lichtenstein, *ibid.* Prof. Susan Handelman points out that *Torah she-ba'al Peh* as the central element in the forging of the encounter with the divine raises the special issue of women's education – where traditionally *Torah she-ba'al Peh* was not studied (or, certainly not as the heart of the curriculum). Even in our generation, where this has begun to change, we dare not exempt ourselves from considering how the encounter via Talmud Torah is forged for young women who may not spend the bulk of their time studying Talmud.

16 On the configurations of educational settings, see: Lawrence A. Cremin, 'Toward an Ecology of Education', in *Public Education* (NY: Basic Books 1976).

17 On the relationship of theory and practice in Jewish education see Seymour Fox, 'Towards a General Theory of Jewish Education', in David Sidorsky, ed. *The Future of the American Jewish Community* (New York: Basic Books 1973) pp.260–70. Rosenak, *Roads to the Palace*, p.99, has defined 'translation' as:

> an attempt, usually by an expert, to render a concept located in a mode of discourse that is incomprehensible to particular hearers, because they don't know it or don't take it seriously, into an idiom that does make sense to them and evokes interest in them, so that they are enabled to learn something from the (original) concept.

Rosenak specifies that his conception of 'translation' differs from those of Schwab. See e.g., Joseph J. Schwab, 'Translating Scholarship into Curriculum', in S. Fox and G. Rosenfeld, ed., *From Scholarship to the Classroom: Translating Jewish Tradition into Curriculum* (New York: JTS 1977) pp.1–30, and 'The Practical 3: Translation into Curriculum', *School Review* (August 1973) pp.501–22.

18 Although, of course, our theories often legitimately come from below; that is, they emanate out of our experiences in practice.

19 See Rosenak, ibid., introduction, pp.xi–xvi, for challenges facing the development of clearer theories and philosophies of Jewish education.

20 For more on this see Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man* (Philadelphia: JPS 1983) part II, 'His Creative Capacity'.

21 There are even opinions, most notably that of the Ra'avad, who hold this obligation to be biblically mandated (Ex. 15:2, 'This is my God, and I will glorify/beautify Him'), while others maintain that the obligation is merely rabbinic in force.

22 TB Bava Kama 9b; TY Peah 1:1.

23 See Yoreh De'ah, 276:2, and Shach #2 (according to the opinion of the *hakhamim* in Gittin). See also Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Reshimot Shiurim – Sukkah* (New York 1989), ed. Rabbi H. Reichman: 110–14; and *Hiddushei Hatam Sofer* to Gittin 20a.

24 Remember the remark of Nachmanides, introduction to Commentary on the Torah, that all of the letters of the Torah itself – joined beginning to end – comprise one of God's names as well.

25 See esp. Haym Soloveitchik, 'Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy', *Tradition* 28:4 (1994) pp.64–130.

26 Ibid., pp.84–6 and 123, n. 63.

27 We know that in many yeshiva day-schools there is *no* mentoring or supervision at all.

28 Lortie, *op. cit.*, pp.73–4, see also, pp.192–6. Compare this to the model of training and apprenticeship in the training of doctors, for example. However, see the model presented in: *With Portfolio in Hand: Validating the New Teacher Professionalism*, ed. Nona Lyons (New York: Teachers College 1998), for an example of teachers' portfolios (which document the complexities of what happens behind the classroom doors) as an avenue toward greater personal reflection and collegial collaboration.

29 See TB Taanit 7a on *hevruta* study's ability to 'sharpen' the student in the way one knife is sharpened against the next, and TB Eruvin 53b–54a for the story of Bruriah who literally whacked a student she observed learning silently to himself (instead of verbalizing the word of his study), because she understood the importance of the dialogical nature of Torah study – even if it occurs alone.

30 In Jerusalem recently, Rabbi Chaim Brovender, myself, and others, have founded ATID (Academy for Torah Initiatives and Directions) along the lines of the models presented here, in which young educators participate in an in-service Fellowship, working on specific personal research and group projects under the guidance of senior mentors.

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